ANNUAL REVIEW 2003-2004

A CATALYST FOR POSITIVE CHANGE

HQCA

We are an arm's length organization empowered and funded by the Government of Alberta through the Minister of Health and Wellness to report directly to Albertans on the quality, safety and performance of health services. The Council identifies best practices, and reviews and monitors the following dimensions of health care quality: access, acceptability, appropriateness, effectiveness, efficiency and patient safety.

Our vision:

Promoting world-class leadership in quality, safety and performance throughout Alberta's health system.

Our mission:

Independently report to Albertans on the quality, safety and performance of the publicly funded health care system.

Our values:

We believe that all Albertans have the right to safe and high quality health care. We value:

- Accountability
- Objectivity
- Transparency
- Equity
- Collaboration
- Shared Learning
- Continuous Improvement
- Excellence

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The Health Quality Council of Alberta strives to be a catalyst for positive change in the province's publicly funded health care system. We are a young organization with a newly expanded mandate. Our focus is making quality an integral part of Alberta's health care system.

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This report shows what we're doing to make the vision of quality a reality. It identifies the partnerships, projects and people that are responding to what Albertans see as health care priorities.

More important, it shows a collective and growing commitment by the provincial government, health system administrators, health care workers and the health professions to create a health system that is safe, accessible, efficient and effective.

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Message from Alberta Health and Wellness Minister Gary Mar

Albertans depend on their public health care system to provide safe patient care and deliver high quality results.

That is why the Alberta government expanded the mandate of the Health Services Utilization and Outcomes Commission to create the Health Quality Council of Alberta in February 2004. This council reports directly to Albertans about patient safety and satisfaction, and the quality and performance of the health system. The council also collaborates with the new Health Council of Canada, the Canadian Patient Safety Institute and other provincial organizations that address quality and safety issues in health care.

Alberta Health and Wellness is proud to be working with the Health Quality Council of Alberta and making the improvements that are required to build a top quality health care system that earns the confidence of Albertans.

Gary G. Mar

Honourable Gary G. Mar, Q.C.
Minister
Alberta Health and Wellness

Message from the Chair and CEO

It's not easy breaking new ground. There are no roadmaps to provide direction; no precedents to follow. But breaking new ground is also exciting as it provides unlimited opportunities for development and change. And development and change are what the past year has been about for our organization.

In February 2004, our name changed from the Health Services Utilization and Outcomes Commission to the Health Quality Council of Alberta (HQCA). The new name reflects an expanded mandate with a clear focus on quality and safety. As the HQCA, we are entrusted by the government to be a catalyst for positive change in Alberta's publicly funded health care system. It's a responsibility we take seriously on behalf of all of our stakeholders, including Alberta's three million people.

It's a challenge we welcome as we continue to look for new and better ways to work with our stakeholders to improve the quality and safety of Alberta's health care system. To achieve this, we spent the past year completing many important organizational tasks and improving communication with our stakeholders, including the public.

We strengthened our governance and organizational infrastructure, reviewing policies, structures and processes. We added key team members in areas such as operations and quality initiatives. We introduced a Web site (www.hqca.ca) and released two flagship publications: **Health Report to Albertans 2003** and **Health Services Satisfaction Survey 2003**.

Early in 2004 we launched the Health Quality Network. The network consists of two forums, one organizational and the other professional, and provides a vehicle for sharing practical information and experience about quality improvement between Alberta's nine health regions, the Alberta Cancer Board, the health professions and the provincial government. Underpinning everything we do is a focus on implementing other changes that will result in greater accountability, transparency and collaboration in all aspects of our organization.

The HQCA's work is overseen and led by our council members. We are fortunate to have members who bring significant health and leadership expertise. Their experience has been invaluable to providing strategic direction to the organization as it grows and matures.

Throughout the year, the HQCA received strong support from the nine health regions, the Alberta Cancer Board, all the health professions and Alberta Health and Wellness. This support has helped us move forward in building an efficient and effective organization better able to fulfill our mandate. In particular, we wish to thank Minister Gary Mar for his strong personal support and commitment.

We are energized about the work we're doing at the HQCA. Based on the commitment and desire we've seen from all our stakeholders, we know we have an opportunity to break new ground and make Alberta a model of health care quality and safety. Looking forward to 2004/2005, we are excited about the many opportunities that lay ahead.

D Lorne Tyrrell

Dr. Lorne J. Tyrrell
Board Chair
Health Quality Council of Alberta

Dr. John W. F. Cowell
Chief Executive Officer
Health Quality Council of Alberta

Bonnie Laing

Bonnie Laing
Vice Chair
Health Quality Council of Alberta

On February 20, 2004, quality health care and improved patient safety became the focus of an expanded mandate for the Health Services Utilization and Outcomes Commission, which was renamed the Health Quality Council of Alberta to reflect its new role.

The HQCA is an arm's length organization empowered and funded by the Government of Alberta through the Minister of Health and Wellness to report directly to Albertans on the quality and performance of health services, including patient safety and access.

We do this by:

- Reporting to Albertans on the quality of the health system based on accessibility, acceptability, appropriateness, efficiency, effectiveness, and patient safety.
- Conducting an annual survey of Albertans to determine satisfaction with the health system and reporting results to the public.
- Identifying concerns about health system quality, including patient safety and access.
- Analyzing trends in the concerns raised by Albertans and providing advice for system quality improvement.
- Collaborating with health regions and stakeholders to define best practices and facilitate knowledge transfer of leading health care practices throughout Alberta.
- Advising the Minister of Health and Wellness on the quality of Alberta's health system and areas for quality research.

As the HQCA works to fulfill its mandate, we have adopted the Canadian Institute for Health Information's quality framework to provide a roadmap for measuring the health of Albertans and the performance of Alberta's health system. The quality framework includes:

Health System Performance
- Acceptability
- Accessibility
- Appropriateness
- Competence
- Continuity
- Effectiveness
- Efficiency
- Safety

Health Status
- Deaths
- Health conditions
- Human function
- Well-being

Non-Medical Determinants of Health
- Health behaviours
- Living and working conditions
- Personal resources
- Environmental factors

Community and Health System Characteristics
- Community
- Health system
- Resources
- Sustainability

As we move forward, the HQCA's work will focus on specific initiatives related to each area.

We have also identified a number of key themes that will guide our work. These items, which are part of our 2003-2005 strategic plan, include:

- delivering high quality products and services;
- increasing focus on patient safety;
- building research capability;
- building organizational capacity;
- promoting development and adoption of a provincial health quality framework; and,
- enhancing public profile.

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Timeline:

Early 1999: Health Services Utilization Steering Committee appointed to investigate the feasibility of establishing a Health Services Utilization Commission.

December 1999: Steering committee produces report entitled **The Health Services Utilization Commission: Developing a Culture of Evaluation.**

May 2001: Alberta government decides to implement the report's recommendations; Health Services Utilization Commission established with Bonnie Laing as Chair. Primary orientation was toward research and public reporting.

January 2002: **Report of the Premier's Advisory Council on Health (Mazankowski Report)** released; recommended establishing a permanent, independent outcomes commission.

March 2002: Health Services Utilization Commission releases **An Inventory of Data Sets in Alberta**, a resource document for system administrators, researchers and analysts addressing health service utilization issues in Alberta.

June 2002: Health Services Utilization and Outcomes Commission established with an expanded mandate as part of the Alberta government's response to the **Mazankowski Report.**

January 2003: Dr. John Cowell hired as chief executive officer; staff and support consultants hired.

August 2003: **Health Report to Albertans** released.

October 2003: **Health Services Satisfaction Survey** released.

February 2004: Named changed to Health Quality Council of Alberta; mandate expanded to include patient safety and access; Dr. Lorne Tyrrell appointed Chair and Bonnie Laing Vice Chair.

Accomplishments

Health Report to Albertans 2003

In August 2003 we released **Health Report to Albertans**, a report that highlighted some key health indicators for Albertans. **Health Report to Albertans 2003** provided a detailed look at selected population health indicators measuring the effectiveness of Alberta's health system and the overall health of Albertans. It was the first time that research and information from various sources had been put together in one report and interpreted for Albertans.

Health Services Satisfaction: Survey of Albertans 2003

We believe it is important to establish ongoing independent measures of Albertans' assessments of health quality, access, safety and service satisfaction based on their personal experiences. In October 2003, the HQCA released the results of its first survey of Albertans, which assessed their general perceptions and actual experiences related to health quality, access, patient safety, and satisfaction with specific health services, both province-wide and within each of the nine health regions.

Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI) Conference

In December 2003, we partnered with the Calgary Health Region and Capital Health to present a satellite broadcast of the 15th **IHI National Forum on Quality Improvement in Health Care**. Over 130 health providers, managers and researchers from Alberta attended the two-day session, which was broadcast in both Calgary and Edmonton. This was our first collaborative effort to share learning in the health care field throughout Alberta.

Health Quality Network (Organizational and Professional Forums)

In February 2004, we launched the **Health Quality Network**, which is comprised of both organizational and professional forums. The organizational forum brings together senior leaders and decision makers from Alberta's nine health regions, the Alberta Cancer Board and Alberta Health and Wellness. We also began establishing the groundwork for a professional forum that brings the regulated health professions together. The network initiative will provide partners with a vehicle for sharing practical information and experiences about quality improvement across the health regions. The goal is to improve the quality and efficiency of care provided by the publicly funded health care system in Alberta both objectively and from the perspective of those who use the system.

Halifax 4: The Canadian Healthcare Safety Symposium

The HQCA, in partnership with Calgary Health Region, Capital Health, and the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta, is sponsoring and organizing the **Halifax 4 Symposium**. This year's symposium, entitled **Building a Culture of Safety**, takes place in Edmonton October 14 to 16, 2004, and is Canada's premiere meeting place of individuals and organizations with a desire to improve patient safety and enhance the overall quality of the health system.

Patient Safety Fellowship

In February 2004, we partnered with the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research (AHFMR) to establish a one-year, full-time research fellowship to conduct research into patient safety. The HQCA is funding the fellowship and the AHFMR is administering it. The fellowship will focus on many of the elements around patient safety, including: measuring and improving communication between health care workers, developing methods to look at issues around patient safety and proposing solutions.

Patient Safety Survey

Based on results from the Health Services Satisfaction Survey where 14 per cent of Albertans reported they or a family member have experienced a medical error, we are conducting an in-depth study that focuses on Albertans' opinions and actual experiences with medical errors and safety issues in the health system. The telephone survey results of Alberta's adult public will be released in Winter 2005.

Review of Best Practices for Handling Potassium Chloride Containing Products in Hospitals, and the Preparation of Batch Amounts of Dialysis Solutions for Continuous Renal Replacement Therapy

Since late March 2004, in response to a ministerial request, we have been conducting an independent review of best practices for handling potassium-containing products in hospitals, and the preparation of batch amounts of dialysis solutions for continuous renal replacement therapy. Medication safety is a significant component of the overall field of patient safety. The findings were made public in July 2004 and are of use to all Alberta's health regions. The HQCA will disseminate the results throughout Alberta and the Canadian Patient Safety Institute will disseminate the findings at the national level.

Looking Forward

Throughout the past year, it has become clear there is a growing commitment from government, health professionals, health administrators and the public to make Alberta's health care system even more robust. Albertans have a safe, high-quality health care system. But we can always improve. The HQCA is well positioned to help make this happen. Through our networks, partnerships and research efforts, we can indeed be a catalyst for positive change in Alberta's health care system.

The HQCA's future plans include:

- Facilitating ongoing collaboration with the health regions and the health professions to build the Health Quality Network as a vehicle for sharing information and best practices.
- Releasing our two flagship publications: **Health Services Satisfaction Survey 2004** (Autumn 2004) and **Health Report to Albertans 2004** (Winter 2005).
- Conducting additional targeted research: **Alberta Patient Safety Survey 2004** (results released Autumn 2004); **Work Patterns Study of Family Physicians and General Practitioners in Alberta** (study underway); **The Impact of a Change in Chiropractic Care Fee Coverage for Low Back Pain in Alberta** (preliminary analysis underway).
- Expanding collaborations with provincial partners such as the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research, Alberta Cancer Board, Health Facilities Review Committee and Protection of Persons in Care, and national partners such as the Health Council of Canada and the Canadian Patient Safety Institute.
- Facilitating focus groups around the complaint handling processes within Alberta's health care system.
- Independent reviews of high-profile critical adverse events in Alberta.

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April 1, 2003 to March 31, 2004

The Health Quality Council of Alberta was pleased to end the year with a surplus. Effective control of the funding allocation permitted the HQCA to balance the needs of a growing organization, while at the same time fulfilling its mandate to report directly to Albertans on the quality and performance of health services, including patient safety and access.

Managing the demands of a growing organization is challenging. As we move forward, we will continue to balance between growth needs, wants and available resources to fulfill our mandate in the most efficient and effective way. A sound financial base combined with strategic planning and organizational accountability will continue to support the HQCA as it strives to be a catalyst for positive change in Alberta's health care system.

The HQCA looks forward to the ongoing responsibility of balancing needs within available resources. With provincial support, we anticipate continued success balanced with fiscal responsibility.

Council Members

Lorne Tyrrell, MD, Chair
Bonnie Laing, Vice Chair
Chris Eagle, MD
Doug Griffiths, MLA
Michael S. Lee, DDS
Elaine Mills
Peter Norton, MD
Linda Steinmann
Doug Tupper

Operations Team

John Cowell, MD
Chief Executive Officer
Norma Brown
Director of Operations
Charlene McBrien-Morrison
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Barbara Wilkinson
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Robin Brandt
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